

**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **West Nile Virus Identified in Southern California.**

The City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services (Health Department) has been notified that the West Nile Virus (WNV) has been identified in Imperial County. Although the virus has not yet resulted in a direct transmission of a human case in California, this is the first indicator of the potential for disease in the State. The Health Department is urging residents to clean up any pools of standing, stagnant water as this provides a breeding ground for mosquitoes that can carry diseases such as WNV. WNV was responsible for nearly 300 deaths in the United States in 2002, and to date in 2003 there have been over 714 human cases and 14 deaths nationally.

Recommendations for keeping mosquitoes under control on resident's personal property are as follows:

- Dispose of anything that can hold standing water such as tin cans, discarded tires, and plastic containers;
- Drain or fill low spots in the ground and drill holes in the bottom of outdoor recycling containers to prevent moisture from collecting;
- Change water in bird baths, decorative fountains and pet feeding bowls often;
- Clean clogged roof gutters regularly;
- Sweep standing water in gutters;
- Clean and chlorinate swimming pools regularly.

In addition, residents should avoid mosquito-infested areas at dawn or dusk, wear long sleeved shirts and long pants when outdoors, ensure all operable windows are screened, and use insect repellent products with between 10%-50% DEET for adults and between 10%-30% for children. Typically, higher concentrations provide longer protection. Residents should follow instructions on the label.

The Health Department has enhanced its Vector Control Program, which routinely provides mosquito surveillance and control in public areas of the City. This program plays an important part in limiting the occurrence of mosquito borne disease, however, the Health Department urges residents to remove standing water from private property to eliminate mosquito breeding sources and prevent disease. (more)

Since WNV affects certain types of birds (crows, jays, magpies, sparrows, finches, and ravens), the Health Department participates in a dead bird

surveillance program and collects the dead birds to determine if they were infected with any viruses. Portions of the City are also served by the Greater Los Angeles Vector Control District and the Compton Creek Vector Control District.

The public can become part of the monitoring effort for WNV by reporting any birds listed above that may have been dead for less than 48 hours and show no sign of decomposition or maggot infestation to a special California Department of Health Services toll-free line: 877-WNV-BIRD. The tissue of the dead birds is tested for the presence of WNV. The virus was most often identified in dead birds, especially crows, in other regions of the country. While there is no evidence that people can get the virus from handling live or dead infected birds, individuals should not attempt to catch or handle them.

If you have any questions regarding mosquito control measures in the city of Long Beach, please feel free to contact the DHHS Environmental Health Program at (562) 570-4132 or go to the DHHS website at [www.longbeach.gov/health](http://www.longbeach.gov/health). Further information may be obtained at the State of California Department of Health Services web page at [www.westnile.ca.gov](http://www.westnile.ca.gov), or at the Federal Centers for Disease control at [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile).